

A CONTROVERSIAL goal two minutes from time robbed Wycombe Wanderers of maximum points from their visit to Southall in the Rothmans Isthmian League Division One game on Tuesday evening.

The controversy was not over the goal itself — but the events that led up to it. Seconds before the ball was headed home by Gary Smith, Southall were given a throw-in by referee Prevett who overruled his linesman from a distance of 15 yards. The linesman had a better view and was only a couple of feet away from the incident. From the throw, the home side won a corner that brought the goal.

Several Wycombe fans were annoyed about the referee overruling the linesman (which is, of course, quite within his rights) but even they must agree that Southall were a little unfortunate to have to go behind to Wycombe's fluke goal after 52 minutes.

Nevertheless, I felt Wycombe were the better side at Western Road and on the overall play, they deserved to win. They had enough chances too, but only one was put away. Much of this game was scrappy, due mainly to a sodden pitch of uneven bounce which made control and passing difficult. The best moves of the match came from Wycombe but Southall also showed at times just why they won promotion from Division Two last season. Particularly impressive was Alan Devonshire, who looked a class above his team-mates. It would be nice to see him operating in the blue shirt!

Once again, the Blues were forced to make several changes due to injuries. In came Peter Spittle for John Maskell and Dave Bullock for John Delaney. Dave Alexander continued at right back while Geoff Anthony played with a heavily strapped thigh that looked as if it weighed a ton.

But it was Geoff who gave

Southall 1, Wycombe Wanderers 1

Report by STUART EARP

Southall most of their early scares. After Knowles had wasted a good chance of beating the coverless Spittle in the fifth minute. Anthony began to worry the home defence with his skills on the flank. Goalkeeper Jarratt had to palm out one cross and then Tony Horseman sent a free kick whistling over the crossbar.

Even at this stage, Wycombe looked the more constructive side. Southall were content to boot the ball anywhere to clear danger and few of the midfield players, including ex-Wycombe Tommy James, were able to set up many dangerous attacks.

LUCKY GOAL

By half time, Dylan Evans and Horseman had both gone close while Southall showed they were dangerous on the break through Clarke and Devonshire. They opened the new half well, and the consistent Keith Mead had to be at his best to halt several quick breaks. But then Wycombe scored their luckiest goal for a long time.

Terry Reardon played the ball out of defence to Alexander who sent a 40 yard lofted pass down the flank to Horseman. He crossed into the box where there seemed no danger for

goalkeeper Jarratt. But he misjudged the flight of the ball and as he waited for it to hit the side netting, it struck the upright and bounced straight into the path of Evans. Dylan accepted the gift gratefully.

The goal did Wycombe the power of good. They began to show a marked improvement all round, especially in their passing which was far more accurate. Horseman forced Jarratt to tip an indirect free kick over the crossbar but from the two corners that followed, Southall broke away dangerously. Each time, with Mead racing back from the set-piece, the cover was pretty thin but on both occasions Dave Bullock and Paul Birdseye made perfectly timed tackles.

Wanderers looked pretty tight in defence with the exception of Alexander who sometimes allowed players too much room. Spittle showed a safe pair of hands on a couple of occasions when plucking crosses out of the air.

Both sides hit the woodwork within eight minutes of each other in the second half. Wycombe's effort came via the boot of Horseman after 67 minutes. 'Bodger' chipped one

of his 'special' free kicks over the defensive wall but watched as the ball hit the underside of the bar and came down for Jarratt to gather safely. Eight minutes later, Devonshire was just as unlucky. In a brilliant break, he beat two would-be tacklers and cut inside. His shot flew over the stranded Spittle, thudded against the underside of the bar and came down to Knowles who lofted the ball over the top. From where I was sitting it seemed the ball had crossed the line on coming down from the bar but both referee and linesman were poorly positioned to make a decision.

Horseman had a great chance to put Wycombe out of reach in the 78th minute. Mick Holfield burst into the Southall box and passed to Howard Kennedy. He spotted Horseman unmarked and slipped the ball across. This left Tony with only Jarratt to beat but his carefully placed shot rolled fractionally past the post.

As the game neared its close, Wycombe had probably the best spell of the game. Reardon and company began to dominate midfield and set up a number of possible chances while both full backs found the opportunity to join the attacks.

Southall must have sensed they could still share the spoils, however, for substitute Orrin had a good chance to equalise but blazed Devonshire's pass over the top. A couple of minutes later, Southall won that corner which was taken quickly. Wanderers were caught on the hop and no one intercepted Smith as he came up to head the ball home from the six yard line.

SOUTHALL: A. Jarratt; G. Towers, H. Manoe, G. Smith, C. Griffiths; T. James, C. Mullan (sub D. Orrin 79 mins), A. Clarke; C. Ropley, R. Knowles, A. Devonshire.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; D. Alexander, K. Mead, D. Bullock, P. Birdseye; H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holfield; A. Horseman, D. Evans, G. Anthony. Sub. D. Cotterill (not used).

Referee: G. Prevett.
Half time: 0-0. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Evans (52), Southall — Smith (88).

Meet the Eagles

RAY PEACOCK: Joined Bedford at the start of last season and established himself as one of the best goalkeepers in the Southern League. Played in all 72 matches last term and was beaten only 33 times in 42 league matches. Previous clubs: Stevenage and Cambridge City.

DAVE SKINN: One of two players who were in the Bedford side for the epic F.A. Cup matches with Wycombe in 1966. Captain of the Eagles, he often pops up to score. Had a particularly good season last year when he played in all 72 games. In his 12th season for the club.

NORMAN COOLEY: The other survivor from 1966 and also in his 12th season with the club. Has played in almost every position for Bedford and is now at centre back.

TREVOR GOULD: The Eagles' player of the year last season and brother of West Ham striker Bobby. The penalty taker of the side, he hasn't missed one for Bedford. Previously with Coventry and Northampton.

BOBBY FOLDS: Missed only three games last year. He is highly consistent in the left back spot and is useful on the overlap, providing dangerous crosses. Previous clubs: Gillingham and Northampton.

PETER HAWKINS: Troubled by a series of injuries last season but has been a regular this term and is an extremely skilful player. A former Welsh Under 23 international, he was previously with Swansea and Northampton.

PETER PHILLIPS: Won two England amateur caps and joined the Eagles after spells with Luton, Cambridge United and Torquay. One of the fastest strikers in Southern League football, he is former Cambridge University sprint champion. Scored 23 goals from 62 appearances last season.

GARY SARGENT: The man everyone is talking about. Has refused repeated offers from Football League clubs who were after his goalscoring ability. Not only strong in the air and a lethal finisher, he can also create goals. Scored 28 last term, the club's leading marksman, and he is top again at the moment with over 20 to his credit.

DAVE PARRATT: Wolves were interested in this player last season when he played a vital part in the club's championship success. Scored all six goals in a reserve game last season, he finished with 14 goals from 61 matches.

RUSSELL SHREAVES: Another utility defender who played 47 games for the Eagles last season.

DAVID EARL: Consistent performer who has scored some vital goals for the club in recent seasons. Likes to go forward, missed only three matches last term.

GLEN BURDETT: Joined Bedford last season from Milton Keynes and won a regular place in the side.

JIMMY CAMPBELL: Left Bedford two years ago when he was sold to Oxford United for a four figure fee. Has now returned to the club after a spell with Chelmsford. An old fashioned winger, he gained youth international caps for England.

LEO MARKHAM: Began his career with Marlow where he soon became their regular top goalscorer. Signed by Watford manager Mike Keen two years ago, he was unable to gain a regular place at Vicarage Road and is now on trial with Bedford.